

Gramercy kids enjoy annual ballet production

Gramercy Park Block Association continued its annual Children's Festive Ballet tradition last week.

Children from the neighborhood were invited to attend the New York Theatre Ballet's production of "The Nutcracker" at the Florence Gould Hall on 59th Street.

Among the stars of this year's production was four-year-old Julia Opatrny, the daughter of Gramercy Park residents Susan Sutherland and Robert Opatrny.

"Julia played the part of an angel and was the youngest member of the cast," said Diana Byer, artistic director of the NYTB.

Since 1989, the GPBA has been a supporter of the NYTB's Project LIFT, a scholarship program for the city's homeless children.

Arlene Harrison, president of the GPBA, explained, "The program includes not only scholar-

ships, but a tutoring program, a mentoring program and community performances and we're delighted and proud to be a part of it."

A poster child for the program is Steven Melendez, 16, who has been with NYTB since being discovered by Bryer in a city shelter at the age of seven.

He has received full scholarships at the Houston Ballet School, San Francisco Ballet School and the School of American Ballet at Lincoln Center. Steven also appeared in the lead children's role of The Kirov Ballet's "Sleeping Beauty" at the Metropolitan Opera House.



TRADITION — The Gramercy Park kids meet some of the dancers who performed for them.